

A look at the arguments of Dave Armstrong that Catholicism is biblical and Protestants are wrong to say it is unbiblical

Armstrong says that formally declaring that a person has left or went outside the Church is the purpose of excommunication and its done to make the person rethink and is not about trying to send somebody to Hell forever. The person loses fellowship in the Church and the right to the sacraments except in danger of death. Armstrong says that calling such a person anathema is to warn others about him and not to imply that he is for Hell.

Response: The person is called anathema which is an extreme term. Anathema is a hate term. Why is the person not just labeled as religiously dubious instead of as anathema or accursed? It is the person who is anathema not their heresy. The Church decrees, "Let him be anathema" not, "Let his doctrine be anathema".

Catholic teaching is that Hell is technically exclusion from the people of God. The Church on earth is considered to be the same Church as the one in Heaven so whatever it excludes has to be excluded by the Church on earth. And Jesus did say it is possible to set yourself in stone against God forever even in this life.

Armstrong approvingly quotes Ronald Knox as saying that it is to be expected that the Church as the holiest thing on earth can produce the worst sinners simply because "of the principle that the corruption of the best is the worst."

Response: The main reason to follow a religion is that it must be the holiest thing available. Armstrong is just making an excuse for the Church failing to function as a good hospital for sinners. Any religion can say what he says. Scientology can try to make its failures out to be proofs that it is true too. You don't have to be the best to be the worst. A religion that needs you to rationalise that way is not a good religion in itself and if the people in it are good that is not down to it but down to them.

The Church implicitly and explicitly would say the same as Knox but that is exactly what a religion that produces bad people and knows it but does not want to take the blame would say.

The Catholic Church has been caught lying that Jesus called Peter rock and referred to that rock as what he would build his church on. Jesus calls Peter Petra, pebble, to contrast him with the Rock, Petros. Petros is thought to refer to Jesus himself who is sometimes called rock in in the Bible. Armstrong says that Jesus is not the foundation of the Church but the builder so he could not have meant himself by the word Petros. Armstrong appeals to Ephesians 2:19 to 22 where the apostles and prophets are called the foundation not Jesus. Jesus is simply called the cornerstone here.

Response: Peter was the first to get people baptised into the Church. He was in a sense the starter of the Church as a social structure. Even if Peter were the rock of the structure he is not necessarily rock of the religion for the social side of religion and the spiritual side can be distinguished. Armstrong forgets that Jesus is using symbolism so he can be rock and builder. And if he is not a rock or stone why does he quote a text that says he was?

Pope Honorius used his role to try to lead the Church into error - contradicting Catholic doctrine that no pope can do that for God prevents them. Armstrong says that Honorius did not define heresy for the whole Church for he only expressed his heresy in what it calls "private letters, not public official teaching".

Reply: In those days the bishop of Rome made no difference between private and public. Even private letters were of extreme importance in an age where communication was hard and every snippet was guarded like gold dust. Honorius was guilty of a serious heresy - that Jesus was not fully man.

The word pope means father. The text 1 Corinthians 4:15 tells them that they have countless guides in Christ but not many fathers for he, Paul, became their father through the gospel.

Armstrong points out that to argue that God and Jesus had to choose men for priesthood only because the culture would not accept women "lies in a lack of faith in God, or in falsely accusing God himself". It does not make sense to argue that God runs all things and had to make do.

Armstrong denies that the golden calf was an image of God for the text says the people wanted new gods and Aaron gave them the calf.

Is Armstrong right that Catholic teaching suggests that if a woman intentionally has an abortion that her baby gets a baptism of blood and goes to Heaven?

2 Corinthians 2:10 is a text where Paul says that anybody who the Corinthians forgive he also forgives. He says that what he has forgiven he has forgiven for their sake in the presence of Jesus Christ.

Armstrong considers texts such as 1 John 5:18 which says that anybody who is God's born child does not sin. He says it is proverbial and not literal for it is obvious we all sin. If so then John expected us to use our common sense.

Armstrong says James 2:10 which says that whoever breaks the law of God breaks it all does not mean that all sins are equally worthy of condemnation for James teaches that all sins are not the same for he spoke of how you could get judged more harshly if you are a teacher of the gospel. It simply means that to break the law is to insult the whole thing not to become automatically the same as a person who breaks every single command.

Armstrong says that Liberius if he caved in and signed an Arian statement then he was forced under threats of being put to death or tortured.

Outside the Church there is no salvation according to Armstrong not aimed at individual Protestants or people who are not Roman Catholics but who are Christians but at rival churches that leave the Roman Catholic Church.

Armstrong quotes verses such as 2 Corinthians 4:10 where we are told we carry the death of Jesus in our bodies and also his life and Galatians 2:20 where Paul says he is crucifixion of Christ. He does not comment on how Paul talks about this subject like Catholics talk about the sacrifice of the cross being present at Mass.

Armstrong tries to assure us that texts in the Bible that say all have sinned are poetic and so do not prove that Mary could be a sinner. Catholic doctrine is that Mary never had any trace of sin. But one thing for sure is that the authors of those texts meant that if any human being could read them they would be reminded that they are sinners. Are we to think Mary could read it and consider herself an exception? Catholic doctrine is that Mary was not conceived in original sin while the rest of us were. But even if she were sin free at conception that does not mean she could not have done as Eve and sinned despite being made sinless.